

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 DHA-02 /081 W
-----181535Z 079724 /53

R 181316Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5592
INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 CAPE TOWN 0054

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINT SF
SUBJ: BLACK ATTITUDES: OVERVIEW

REF: PRETORIA 5912

1. SUMMARY: THOUGH BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE 15 MILLION
REPPRESSED BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS WHO MAKE UP ABOUT 70 PERCENT OF
THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION SEEMS DESTINED TO BECOME INCREASINGLY
VIGOUROUS, THE PROCESS IS OBSTRUCTED BY DIVERGENCIES IN BACK-
GROUND, EXPERIENCE, AND OUTLOOK. THE 7 MILLION HOMELAND BLACKS
ARE LARGELY ISOLATED AND STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY TRIBAL TRADITION.
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THE 4 MILLION OR SO SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE WHITE RURAL AREAS
ARE SCARECELY MORE SOPHISTICATED. THE CENTER OF FRUSTRATION
AND FERMENT IS FOUND AMONG THE MORE THAN 4 MILLION URBAN
BLACKS, HALF OF WHOM ARE CONCENTRATED IN THE JOHANNESBURG-
PRETORIA AREA. RELATIVE TO HIS RURAL AND HOMELAND BROTHERS,
THE URBAN BLACK IS BETTER EDUCATED, POLITICALLY AWARE, LESS
SECURE, AND MORE INTENSELY SUBJECTED TO THE HARSHEST FORMS

OF APARTHEID. BUT THE BLACK URBAN COMMUNITY IS DIVIDED WITHIN ITSELF ON HOW TO REACT TO THE APARTHEID SYSTEM, AND BY TRADITIONAL TRIBAL RIVALRIES, DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF THE MIGRANT WORKERS AND THE PERMANENT POPULATION, AND A DISTINCT GENERATION GAP. WHEN AND HOW SUBSTANTIAL SEGMENTS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S BLACK POPULATION WILL BE READY TO CONFRONT THE REGIME ON A MAJOR SCALE IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT. ONE CAN POSTULATE A SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH STRONG BLACK ACTION COULD CRYSTALIZE QUICKLY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZING AND MOTIVATING BLACKS IS LIKELY TO BE MORE GRADUAL ALTHOUGH NO LESS INEXORABLE.

2. WHAT IS A BLACK? ETHNIC GROUPS IN SOUTH AFRICA, EXCEPT THE CHINESE, FREQUENTLY REFER TO THEMSELVES AS "BLACK" IN ANY CONTEXT WHICH DIFFERENTIATES BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICAN WHITES AND ALL OTHERS. BLACK IS THE PREFERRED SUBSTITUTE FOR THE GENERALIZATION "NON-WHITE." BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THERE IS UNITY OF INTERESTS EXCEPT IN THE GENERAL EFFORT TO OVERCOME THE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION WHICH DENIES THEM BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. THE COLORED COMMUNITY (I.E., ALL THOSE NOT CLASSIFIED AS WHITE, BLACK OR INDIAN) THINKS OF ITSELF MORE AS DISOWNED WHITE THAN AS RELATIVELY PRIVILEGED BLACK. INDIANS AND COLOREDS WANT AN EXPANSION OF THEIR PREROGATIVES IN ALL RESPECTS INCLUDING PLACE OF RESIDENCE, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, AND JOB RESERVATION BUT HAVE BEEN DISINCLINED TO SHARE PRESENT ADVANTAGES (E.G., LABOR UNION RIGHTS) WITH BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS, ESPECIALLY WHERE THEIR ECONOMIC INTERESTS ARE AFFECTED. INDEED, THERE IS AN UNDERLYING CONCERN

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AMONG COLOREDS AND INDIANS THAT WERE BLACKS TO GAIN THE ASCENDANCY, THEY WOULD BE EVEN LESS UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR INTERESTS THAN WHITES. THE ATTITUDE IS MORE PREVALENT AMONG OLDER PERSONS THAN AMONG THE YOUNG, BUT IN A SITUATION WHERE ADVANTAGE IS BEING PARCELLED OUT BIT BY BIT, EACH INCLINES TOWARD TAKING AND PROTECTING HIS SHARE FROM ANY LESS FORTUNATE, UNTIL AND UNLESS ALL ARE ELEVATED TO EQUALITY WITH WHITES. THE THRUST OF THE APARTHEID POLICY IS TO EMPHASIZE DIFFERENTIATION AND SEPARATENESS WHICH SUBTLELY PLAYS ON THE FEARS AND SUSPICIONS OF THE VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS AND SUBGROUPS.

3. SINCE SOME PRECISION IS REQUIRED IN REFERRING TO THE DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION, WE WILL REFER TO THE INDIVIDUAL ETHNIC GROUPS BY THEIR LOCALLY ACCEPTED NAMES: I.E., INDIAN, COLORED AND BLACK, RESPECTIVELY. "BLACK" WILL BE USED IN THIS MESSAGE SERIES INSTEAD OF "BLACK AFRICAN" OR "BANTU," TERMS IN COMMON USE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

4. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION: THE LATEST FIGURES AVAILABLE TO US (WHICH INCLUDE TRANSKEI XHOSAS FOR COMPLETENESS OF PICTURE) INDICATE THAT OF ABOUT 15 MILLION BLACKS, 7 MILLION LIVE IN HOMELANDS AND EIGHT MILLION LIVE IN WHITE AREAS. OF THE LATTER GROUP, 4.4 MILLION RESIDE IN URBAN CENTERS, WITH ABOUT HALF OF THESE LOCATED IN THE JOHANNESBURG-PRETORIA AREA, AND MOST OF THE BALANCE CONCENTRATED NEAR DURBAN, EAST LONDON, PORT ELIZABETH AND CAPE TOWN. SOWETO TOWNSHIP IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE WELL OVER A MILLION INHABITANTS, OF WHOM ABOUT 320,000 ARE ACTIVE IN THE LABOR FORCE, AND ABOUT 278,000 ARE STUDENTS. SOMETHING OVER 500,000 BLACKS RESIDE IN TWO URBAN TOWNSHIPS AROUND DURBAN. THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN CAPE TOWN TOTALS ABOUT 220,000 OF WHOM AROUND 100,000 ARE RESIDING ILLEGALLY. STUDENTS NUMBER ABOUT 20,000. THE OTHER 3.6 MILLION BLACKS LIVE ON WHITE FARMS AND IN SMALL RURAL COMMUNITIES. WITH THE EXCEPTION
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OF A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF INDIAN AND COLORED FARMERS, MOST INDIANS AND COLOREDS ARE URBAN DWELLING. INDIANS TOTAL ABOUT 750,000 AND COLOREDS 2.4 MILLION. INDIANS ARE CONCENTRATED IN NATAL, PARTICULARLY AROUND DURBAN. 87.3 PERCENT OF COLOREDS RESIDE IN CAPE PROVINCE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 0054

5. FACTORS INFLUENCING POLITICAL AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES:
THERE ARE MANY FACTORS INFLUENCING THE OUTLOOK OF BLACKS
BUT THE FOLLOWING ARE AMONG THE MORE SIGNIFICANT:

A. URBAN BLACKS LIVE IN CONTROLLED
EXCLUSIVELY
BLACK RESIDENTIAL AREAS WHERE THE HUMILIATION AND
INTIMIDATION OF APARTHEID IS HARSH. THEIR RESENTMENT
AGAINST APARTHEID RUNS DEEPEST BUT IT IS TEMPERED BY THE
NECESSITY TO EARN A LIVING WORKING IN THE WHITE COMMUNITY
OR WHITE-RUN INDUSTRY. YOUNG STUDENTS ARE MOST ISOLATED
FROM WHITES AND ARE LESS INHIBITED BY THAT SENSE OF
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DEPENDENCY. THEIR PRINCIPAL CONTACT IS WITH WHITE
OFFICIALS WITHIN THE TOWNSHIPS, THE SYMBOL OF THEIR
OPPRESSION. THE NATURE OF THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH WHITES
AND THE FRUSTRATIONS OF THE BLACK GHETTO HAS A PROFOUND
EFFECT WHEN ADDED TO THE NORMAL IMPATIENCE AND IDEALISM
OF YOUTH. FEELING LESS DEPENDENT ON WHITES THAN THEIR
ADULT COUNTERPARTS, BLACK STUDENTS ARE MORE EXPOSED TO
REBEL AGAINST THE SYSTEM.

B. BLACKS IN HOMELANDS WHO DO NOT COMMUTE TO
WORK IN WHITE AREAS CONTINUE A LIFE STYLE STRONGLY
INFLUENCED BY TRIBAL CUSTOM. THEIR CONTACT WITH WHITES
IS LIMITED AND LARGELY WITH LOCAL ADMINISTRATORS AND
MISSIONAIRES. THESE BLACKS TEND TO BE CONSERVATIVE,
TRADITION-BOUND AND HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS OF OUTSIDERS.
THEY TEND TO BE FATALISTIC ABOUT THEIR LOT, ARE NOT
POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED AND HAVE BEEN HIGHLY RESISTANT
TO URBAN STUDENT EFFORTS TO SECURE THEIR SUPPORT.

C. BLACKS IN RURAL WHITE AREAS ARE SCATTERED AND
ISOLATED. THEY EXPERIENCE APARTHEID BUT IN LESS HARSH
TERMS THAN THEIR URBAN COUNTERPARTS BECAUSE OF THE OFTEN CLOSE,
IF PATERNALISTIC, TIES BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE IN THIS
CONTEXT. THEY ALSO TEND TO BE FATALISTIC ABOUT THEIR
SITUATION, BEING LESS WELL EDUCATED AND LESS EXPOSED

TO THE INFLUENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT LIE BEYOND THEIR ISOLATION. THEY HAVE STAYED OUT OF THE CURRENT UNREST.

D. MIGRANT WORKERS, EVEN THOSE FROM WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA, WHO HAVE NO STAKE IN THE TOWNSHIP AS SUCH AND WHOSE INTERESTS ARE FOCUSED PRINCIPALLY ON TRANSITORY PLEASURES AND A NEST EGG TO TAKE HOME, HAVE GENERALLY REMAINED ALOOF FROM STUDENT INCITEMENTS. IN THE CASE OF ZULU HOSTELS IN SOWETO AND XHOSA HOSTELS IN NYANGA, WORKERS HAVE VIOLENTLY RESISTED STUDENT EFFORTS TO IMPOSE THEIR FIAT.

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YM UNIFYING FACTORS: COLOR IS THE CRITERIA FOR TREATMENT UNDER LAW IN SOUTH AFRICA AND IS AN IMPORTANT UNIFYING FACTOR. BUT THE MORE COMPELLING FORCE IS THE SHARED GRIEVANCES ARISING FROM DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES AND POLICIES WHICH WOUNDS THE DIGNITY OF BLACKS AND FRUSTRATES DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR POTENTIAL. SPECIFIC EVENTS SUCH AS VIOLENT BLACK-WHITE CONFRONTATIONS, DETENTIONS AND OTHER DELIBERATE EFFORTS TO PREVENT BLACKS FROM PROTESTING THEIR LOT ACCENTUATE THE GRIEVANCES. AS INDICATED IN THE PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH, THIS COMES INTO SHARPER FOCUS FOR THE RELATIVELY SOPHISTICATED URBAN BLACK WHO IS ACUTELY CONSCIOUS OF THE DISCRIMINATION AND DISADVANTAGES IMPOSED ON HIM AND THE EVENTS TRANSPIRING AROUND HIM AND WHO SHARES THOSE EXPERIENCES IN CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH SEVERAL MILLION LIKE HIM. IT IS SIGNIFICANTLY LESS SO FOR THE MILLIONS OF OTHERS IN RURAL AREAS LESS AWARE, FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, OF THE WORLD AROUND THEM AND THEIR OWN POTENTIAL IN IT.

AMONG OTHER FACTORS WHICH TEND TO UNITE ALL BLACKS IN OUTLOOK AND PURPOSE ARE:

A. AWARENESS OF THE RISE TO POWER OF BLACKS IN NEIGHBORING AREAS OF AFRICA. AS SUCCESS OF BLACK NATIONALISM MOVES CLOSER TO SOUTH AFRICA'S BORDERS, THIS EXAMPLE IS MORE DIRECT AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT MORE COMPELLING.

B. AWARENESS OF THE GROWING SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR POWER-SHARING PRINCIPLES. THERE IS, HOWEVER, SOME FRUSTRATION WITH THE LACK OF CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF IMPACT OF THE PUBLIC POSITIONS SO OFTEN ENUNCIATED BY OUTSIDERS.

C. AWARENESS OF THE POTENTIAL AVAILABILITY OF MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR MORE RADICAL MOVEMENTS FROM NEIGHBORING BLACK STATES, SOME WESTERN STATES, THE SOVIET BLOC, AND
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COMMUNIST CHINESE.

7. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO DISUNITY: ALL BLACKS SHARE A DESIRE TO SEE CONCRETE IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR LOT VIS-A-VIS WHITES, BUT SPECIFIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS VARY ACCORDING TO EDUCATION, ECONOMIC SITUATION AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT. THE DIFFERENCES MAY NOT BE READILY APPARENT TO THE OUTSIDER WHO FREQUENTLY DOES NOT LOOK BEYOND THE INJUSTICES OF APARTHEID. THAT SUCH DIFFERENCES EXIST AND ARE IMPORTANT CAN BE FOUND IN THE ANC-PAC SPLIT, TRIBAL RIVALRIES, THE GENERATION GAP IN THE TOWNSHIPS, AND CONTROVERSY OVER HEMELAND POLICY. BECAUSE THE SAG IMPEDES POLITICAL ACTION BY BLACKS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, THIS RANGE OF CENTRIFUGAL FORCES DOES NOT HAVE FULL PUBLIC PLAY, BUT THEY ARE EVIDENT IN THE DIFFICULTIES BEING EXPERIENCED BY CHIEF GATSHA BUTHELEZI IN ORGANIZING A BLACK UNITY FRONT. WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT, SEVERAL SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS APPLY:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 CAPE TOWN 0054

A. EDUCATION: THE SPREAD IN PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN EDUCATED, POLITICALLY ORIENTED URBAN BLACKS AND THEIR HOMELAND COUSIN FRUSTRATES BOTH. NEITHER CAN FULLY ACCEPT THE OUTLOOK OR PRIORITIES OF THE OTHER ONCE GENERALITIES HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED. A FURTHER DISUNIFYING FACTOR AMONG URBAN BLACKS IS THAT EDUCATION OF THOSE OVER 40 WAS OFTEN CHURCH ORIENTED AT MISSION SCHOOL USING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, WHILE THAT OF THE YOUNGER GROUP IS SECULAR AT STATE SCHOOLS WITH A COMBINATION OF AFRICAN DUTCH, ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS INSTRUCTION. THE GENERATION GAP IS WIDENED BY THIS DIFFERENCE.

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B. ECONOMIC POSITION: THE PERSON WITH CLOSE TIES OR PERSONAL POSITION IN A HOMELAND OR TRIBAL STRUCTURE IS WARY ABOUT RISKING THIS STATUS TO OBTAIN SOME ADVANTAGE IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT OR UNCERTAIN POLITICAL CHANGE. THE EROSION OF TRADITIONAL PATTERNS WHICH MUST ACCOMPANY THE DEVELOPING DESIRE TO SEEK CHANGE IS SLOW AND UNCERTAIN. TO A DEGREE, SIMILARLY, THE ESTABLISHED FARM LABOR IN WHITE AREAS, WHOSE FAMILY COUNTS WITH THE BASIC NECESSITIES AND CAN TURN TO A PATRON FOR HELP WHEN IT SEEMS NECESSARY, HAS YET TO SHOW HIMSELF WILLING TO RISK THIS CERTAIN EXISTENCE FOR SOME OTHER. PARTICULARLY IN A PERIOD OF ACUTE RECESSION, THE EMPLOYED URBAN BLACK IS INHIBITED FROM ACTIONS WHICH COULD JEOPARDIZE HIS JOB. HE IS CAUGHT IN THE DILEMMA OF HOW TO SHOW HIS DISPLEASURE AT HIS LOT IN LIE VIS-A-VIS WHITES WITHOUT RISKING THE SLIM ADVANTAGES HE MAY FEEL HE HAS NOW. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE BLACKS POSSESS THE FORMIDABLE WEAPON OF WITHHOLDING LABOR (71.4 PER CENT OF THE WORK FORCE IS BLACK) BUT THIS ASSUMES THAT HE IS ORGANIZED, UNITED AND ADEQUATELY FINANCED, WHICH HE IS NOT.

C. EVALUATIONS OF THE PROSPECTS OF CHANGE: SOUTH AFRICA'S BLACKS DIFFER SUBSTANTIALLY IN THEIR EVALUATIONS OF THE PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE AND METHODS AND RISKS INVOLVED IN SEEKING IT. A LARGE NUMBER ARE UNCERTAIN AS TO WHAT CAN OR SHOULD BE DONE TO PROMOTE THEIR INTERESTS AND ARE TIMID OR FEARFUL ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES THAT MIGHT ENSUE IF REAL PRESSURE TACTICS ARE TO BE APPLIED. THE IMPATIENT YOUNG URBAN ACTIVISTS WANT TO GO INTO THE STREETS NOW. IN

THEIR HASTE THEY HAVE GONE AFTER TARGETS CLOSE AT HAND
WITHIN THE TOWNSHIPS. IN SO DOING THEY HAVE TURNED ON
THEMSELVES, STAYING AWAY FROM SCHOOL AND DESTROYING THEIR
OWN FACILITIES. THIS HAS ALARMED THE GOVERNMENT TO BE
SUE, BUT IS HAS NOT HIT AT THE VULNERABILITIES OF THE
WHITE ESTABLISHMENT IS SUCH A WAY AS TO INDUCE SIGNIFICANT
CHANGES. NEVERTHELESS IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED THAT STUDENT
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ACTION HAS DRAMATIZED THE STRUGGLE AT HOME AND ABROAD AND
CONTRIBUTED TO THE SHARP DECLINE OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT ON
WHICH SOUTH AFRICA SO HEAVILY DEPENDS. BY CONTRAST, EXPERIENCED
POLITICAL LEADERS SUCH AS CHIEF BUTHELEZI SEE THE
BLACK STRUGGLE ADVANCING PREFERABLY IN TERMS OF ORGANIZATION
AND COOPERATIVE EFFORT. BUTHELEZI ESCHEWS VIOLENCE, AT LEAST
FOR THE PRESENT, IN FAVOR OF PEACEFUL RESISTANCE USING THE
BLACKS' MOST POWERFUL WEAPON: THE WITHHOLDING OF
LABOR. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SOME URBAN YOUTHS, MOST
BLACKS STILL FAVOR EVOLUTIONARY, RATHER THAN REVOLUTIONARY,
CHANGE. THEY DO NOT YET WANT TO DESTROY THE HOUSE,
PREFERRING THE HOPE THAT SOUTH AFRICA MAY REMAIN AN INTEGRAL
WHOLE AND THAT THEY MAY BE EQUAL LEGATEES OF THIS RELATIVELY
DEVELOPED SOCIETY ONE DAY.

8. IN SUMMARY, ALTHOUGH THE FACT OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
WOULD SEEM TO CONSTITUTE AN OVERWHELMING FORCE LEADING TOO
UNITY AND ACTION ON A BROAD FRONT, SUCH IS NOT YET THE CASE.
DESPITE ALL THE SYMPATHIES AND GENERALIZED GOALS WHICH
ARE SHARED, BLACK LEADERS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO BRING
LARGE SEGMENTS OF THE BLACK POPULATION TO A STATE OF
READINESS TO CONFRONT THE GOVERNMENT ON A MAJOR SCALE.
MUCH DEPENDS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN NEIGHBORING STATES, MEASURES
APPLIED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND HOW THE SAG
RESPONDS TO THE PRESSURE FOR CHANGE. ONE CAN POSTULATE A
SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH STRONG BLACK ACTION COULD
CRYSTALLIZE VERY QUICKLY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PROCESS
OF ORGANIZING AND MOTIVATING BLACKS IS LIKELY TO BE MORE
GRADUAL ALTHOUGH NO LESS INEXORABLE.

9. IN THE MOSAIC OF REPORTS THAT WILL FOLLOW, WE WILL TRY
TO PORTRAY THE FORCES AT WORK AMONG SOUTH AFRICA'S BLACKS
AS A BACKDROP TO WHAT WE ANTICIPATE WILL BE A STEADILY
GROWING MILITANCY IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE EQUAL
RIGHTS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TRIBALISM, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, POPULAR RESENTMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CAPET00054
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770018-0706
Format: TEL
From: CAPE TOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770143/aaaablec.tel
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Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 9
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PRETORIA 5912
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
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Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3575482
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BLACK ATTITUDES: OVERVIEW
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/aa8247d5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009